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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 26 April 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. DE ARAUJO CASTRO (Brazil)

- Statement by the Chairman
- Reports by Chairmen of Working Groups

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman: As members know, the Disarmament Commission concluded the first phase of its work for the current session on 19 and 20 April, when we had a general exchange of views with the participation of a large number of delegations. In my opinion, the statements made in the course of that general exchange of views, or general debate, were extremely thoughtful and useful to our work; they concentrated mainly on the substantive items on our working agenda and as such, I think, made a very positive contribution to our work.

Thereafter, the Commission embarked on the second phase of its work, in which all three working groups began their deliberations on their respective agenda items; in the course of those deliberations under the guidance of the three very able Chairmen of the working groups, views were expressed and proposals made by delegations on the subjects under consideration. A number of delegations have already submitted to the Commission working papers on various agenda items; those working papers have been circulated. It is possible, indeed expected, that more working papers will be submitted in the course of the deliberations of the three working groups. In that connection, I invite all delegations that intend to present such working papers to do so as soon as possible so as to permit their timely processing.

REPORTS BY CHAIRMEN OF WORKING GROUPS

The CHAIRMAN: As I indicated at our last plenary meeting, held on Tuesday, 20 April, the main purpose of this meeting is to hear the progress reports of the Chairmen of the three working group on their work on their respective agenda items. Afterward we shall consider our working timetable for the second week of this session.

(The Chairman)

I call first on the Chairman of Working Group I, Ambassador Victor Batiouk of Ukraine.

Mr. BATIOUK (Ukraine), Chairman of Working Group I: Last week, Working Group I, on "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons", held one official meeting and one session of unofficial consultations.

The official meeting took place on Thursday, 22 April; during that meeting the Chairman made an introductory statement in which the work done at last year's session was summarized and a tentative schedule for the work of this session was outlined. In accordance with that schedule, we shall try to finish our work on a rolling text for possible adoption by the Disarmament Commission, whose conclusions on this item will be finalized and approved next year.

Delegations wishing to make general statements did so, and the Chairman invited all delegations to present working papers at an early stage. It was also stressed that the rolling paper would be based on the working documents and conclusions of last session, as well as on the papers to be introduced this year.

At the unofficial meeting that took place on Friday, 23 April, the Chairman attempted to present an outline for a possible rolling paper. The exchange of opinions was very useful, and in view of that exchange of opinions the revised outline for the rolling paper will be presented today. The compilation of the rolling text for the document to be prepared for the end of the session will be carried out with due consideration for the working papers and other relevant documents submitted in writing by delegations during the present and last sessions.

(Mr. Batiouk, Chairman, Working Group I)

The attention of the Chairman was drawn to the fact that there was a low turnout for the meetings because they were being held concurrently with the meetings of other working groups. That is why the request was made to provide, as far as possible, for separate meeting times for working groups. That concern was presented to you, Mr. Chairman, at Friday's meeting of the Bureau; it was agreed that that concern would be taken into consideration as far as possible. We understand very well, of course, that it will be impossible to abolish concurrent meetings completely.

The CHAIRMAN: I note with satisfaction that Ambassador Batiouk has already attempted to begin to focus the work of Working Group I in such a way as to enable it to create a basis that will lead us to a successful conclusion of its work next year.

As to his reference to the question of simultaneous meetings, we know it is a problem for everyone; we shall be discussing it a little later on when we consider our working timetable for this week. I would just mention that following this plenary meeting, a meeting of Working Group I will be held in this room, chaired by Ambassador Batiouk; no simultaneous meetings of other working groups will be held. That is part of the arrangement we made so as to advance the work of the working group.

As no delegation wishes to comment on the report of the Chairman of Working Group I, I call now on the Chairman of Working Group II, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann of Germany.

Mr. HOFFMANN (Germany), Chairman of Working Group II: Last Wednesday, Working Group II started its deliberations on guidelines and recommendations on regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security. On that day we held a general debate and prepared a programme of work. On Wednesday and Thursday, 21 and 22 April, we also had a first reading of chapters III and V of the 1991 and 1992 reports, relating to ways and means, machineries and modalities, and the role of the United Nations. There were a number of interesting proposals and remarks; these will be worked into a Chairman's working paper, which will appear later this week.

On Thursday, 22 April we introduced a Chairman's working paper on the first two chapters - on the relationship between regional disarmament, arms limitation and global security, and on principles and guidelines - and by Friday, 23 April, we had already started negotiating the text of chapter I, and settled a number of paragraphs. We shall continue this work this week; when we have finished the first two chapters we shall discuss the last three chapters, with, as I said, a Chairman's working paper in our hands.

So far I think we have worked very efficiently and are fully within the timetable.

The CHAIRMAN: As members know, Working Group II, together with Working Group III, has the responsibility of trying to conclude the consideration of the item this year. I think that the information which the Chairman of Working Group II has given us and our knowledge of the specific work being done in his Group augur well for the conclusion of this work, under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Hoffmann. With the presentation of Chairmen's papers and the fact that Ambassador Hoffmann has already started the process of negotiating specific texts - which I believe he has done in a rather expeditious manner - I think we have a good chance, under his guidance and with the cooperation of all delegations, to achieve good results.

If there is no comment, I shall now call on the representative of Mongolia, Mr. Erdenechuluun, Chairman of Working Group III on the role of science and technology.

Mr. ERDENECHULUUN (Mongolia), Chairman of Working Group III: It is my pleasure to inform you, Sir, that Working Group III began its consideration of agenda item 6, entitled "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields", on Wednesday, 21 April 1993. As you are aware, Working Group III is expected to conclude its consideration of the item at this session and to submit specific conclusions and recommendations to the Disarmament Commission for its consideration and approval.

The Working Group has to date held two substantive meetings. At its first meeting, the Group agreed that the basis for its consideration would be the working non-paper prepared on the basis of the text contained in the report of the Working Group on the subject during the 1992 session of the Disarmament Commission. The Working Group had a very useful and constructive

(Mr. Erdenechuluun, Chairman, Working Group III)

deliberation on the issues and heard substantive statements made on the working non-paper, as well as on the three working papers contained in documents A/CN.10/175, A/CN.10/176 and A/CN.10/177, which are available to it. The Group will continue its detailed examination of these working papers with a view to finalizing its conclusions and recommendations. It will endeavour to benefit to the maximum from the limited time at its disposal in order to meet the expectations of the Commission.

In conclusion, I should like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations participating in the deliberations of Working Group III for their spirit of cooperation, which I hope will continue in the coming days.

The CHAIRMAN: Like Working Group II, Working Group III also has the responsibility of trying to conclude its work this year and presenting specific recommendations. In fact, it will be recalled that, besides the general resolution on the Disarmament Commission's work, we also had a specific resolution that referred to the work in this specific area. It is a very complex area with which I personally have been associated in the past, and I know that there are a number of problems to be solved. But, as Mr. Erdenechuluun mentioned very cogently, we are benefiting from a spirit of cooperation and understanding among delegations and the will to conclude our work successfully under his guidance and under the working methods devised within his Working Group. I also think that that gives us the possibility of successfully concluding the work of this Working Group.

There being no comments on the report presented by the Chairman of Working Group III, we have thus completed the first round of progress reports from the Working Groups on the various agenda items. As indicated in the

(The Chairman)

general programme of work for this session, we will be hearing progress reports from the Chairmen of the Working Groups next Monday, 3 May.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The CHAIRMAN: I would now like to deal with the weekly working timetable. We had a meeting on Friday, 23 April of the Expanded Bureau with the participation of the members of the Bureau and of the three Chairmen of the working groups. As a result of our consideration of this matter, we came up with the working timetable which is distributed in Informal Paper No. 2, dated 23 April 1993.

In preparing this working timetable, we tried to concilate two different approaches to our work. One would have us working as much as possible simultaneously, so as to make the best use of the limited time available and of the conference facilities that have been placed at our disposal. The other would point out that, if we were to hold more than one formal meeting at the same time, it would create problems for some delegations, in particular the smaller ones.

As a result of what we considered at that meeting, for example, this morning there are no simultaneous meetings, nor are there any for the whole of Friday, 30 April, so as to permit each of the Working Groups to hold at least one formal meeting this week that would not coincide with any informal consultations or meetings of the other working groups. During the rest of the week, we have set up simultaneous meetings in which there is only one formal meeting while the others are designated as informal consultations, the main difference being that at informal consultations decisions are not taken on matters under consideration. We go through them; we can make suggestions; we can informally reach certain understandings; but the idea is that, later on at

(The Chairman)

a certain stage, these questions may be reopened at a formal meeting, where they will be subject to more formal confirmation. This would facilitate the situation for delegations that would find it difficult to be present at two simultaneous formal meetings, which we would be avoiding.

There are two very miror corrections to be made to the text before us in Informal Paper No. 2. On Wednesday, 28 April, we have a reference to a morning meeting of Working Group III on science and technology that is designated as informal consultations. In principle, we would have a very brief formal meeting of Working Group III followed by informal consultations in the same room. But the Chairman of Working Group III has indicated his intention in principle to open that meeting on a formal basis and then immediately to transform it into informal consultations.

There is a misprint concerning the meeting of Working Group II on regional disarmament on the afternoon of Thursday, 29 April, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. This should be designated as an informal consultation of Working Group II. The rest is as we decided to recommend to the Commission in the meeting of the expanded Bureau.

I shall now call on delegations wishing to comment so that we might see if we can accept this timetable as a basis for our work, recalling that, as I have mentioned, we did find that this was one, and possibly the best, way of trying to conciliate these two trends. We are very much aware that some delegations are very insiscent on our holding simultaneous meetings while others feel that we should not. That is the procedure we shall follow, at least for the second week. Obviously, it will be subject to review during the third week, which will probably be the most crucial week of work, when we will be finalizing our consideration of the various agenda items for this session.

(The Chairman)

In the case of the second and third items, we will be finalizing their consideration within the Disarmament Commission.

Does any delegation wish to speak to comment on the working timetable contained in Informal Paper No. 2?

Mr. RIVERO ROSARIO (Cuba) (interpretation from Spanish): First of all we should like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the proposed timetable for our work this week. I should also like to thank the Chairmen of the Working Groups for the reports they have given us.

Concerning the subject before us - the programme of work for this week - my delegation notes that, in accordance with the decisions that have been adopted, we have fundamental work to be carried out in the Working Groups on science and technology and on the regional approach. Even though we will be concluding our fundamental task on nuclear disarmament next year, this Working Group will be meeting anyway, which we think right and proper.

The basic task of this week is a series of meetings on the two priority items. My delegation shares the concern about holding simultaneous meetings of the two Working Groups covering the two items of higher priority. We should like to put on record our concern about this, although at the same time we note - as you, Mr. Chairman, indicated - that this week is crucial to our making progress with our work. In this regard, we are prepared to make the effort you appealed to us to make.

I would, however, in conclusion like to pose one question. My delegation notes that for the item on regional approach there are seven formal meetings of that Working Group planned, together with one meeting for consultations, while the Working Group on the item on science and technology has only two formal meetings planned and six meetings for informal consultations.

We understand the need, as you pointed out, Mr. Chairman, to synchronize the formal meetings - which will be held to try to take decisions for further consideration - and the parallel, informal meetings, where there would be an exchange of views but no decisions would be taken right away. We understand

(Mr. Rivero Rosario, Cuba)

this, but the basic question we should like to ask is whether this imbalance between seven formal meetings on the regional approach and only two on science and technology, in the opinion of the Bureau - when it met, and in the proposal you made today, Mr. Chairman - does not imply, and this is my delegation's interpretation, that greater priority is being accorded to the regional approach than to the subject of science and technology; or whether - this is looking too far ahead, perhaps - or not the Bureau had it in mind for the following week to reverse the priority, in terms of numbers of formal meetings.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the representative of Cuba raised a pertinent question, because, looking at the working timetable for this week, one will note that a larger number of formal meetings are assigned to Working Group II than to Working Group III. The reason for this - and I would invite the Chairman of Working Group III, Ambassador Erdenechuluun, to clarify this further - is basically that the Chairman of Working Group III felt that it would be more appropriate, bearing in mind the way he is organizing the work in his Working Group, to have a larger number of informal meetings.

I think the total time available for the two Working Groups is supposed to be the same - I may be mistaken - but the question is more one of distributing that time between formal and informal meetings.

At the same time, Ambassador Hoffmann expressed a preference for a larger number of formal meetings, bearing in mind the type of work he is doing right now, going paragraph by paragraph and trying to see if they can already be adopted.

So, at this stage in the work, it was felt - and, on this, I understand there was agreement between the Chairmen of the two Working Groups - that it would be more rational to organize the work in this way, allotting the same

(The Chairman)

amount of time for both Working Groups but characterizing them in different ways. I think this is more a question of expediency, bearing in mind the different working methods that are being used in the two Working Groups.

I wonder if either Ambassador Erdenechuluun or Ambassador Hoffmann wishes to comment further on this? I do think the point raised by the representative of Cuba was pertinent and good for clarification of a question that was raised in the Bureau meeting, and which I failed to clarify when I presented the working timetable here.

Mr. ERDENECHULUUN (Mongolia), Chairman of Working Group III: There is almost nothing on my part to add to what you have just said, Mr. Chairman. My understanding was that there were some dificulties involved in having too many formal meetings because smaller delegations would be in a more difficult situation in regard to attending the formal meetings simultaneously. That is why we thought, since the Working Group has started to work on a Chairman's non-paper, and another revised text of the Chairman's non-paper is coming out this afternoon, it would be a good idea to start now with informal consultations, so that later on we could, if we agree on certain formulations, start adopting them at the formal meetings of the Working Group.

However, I thought that this week would have its first half devoted to informal consultations, or perhaps even more, that three quarters of the meetings would be devoted to informal consultations, so that on Friday, if there is definite progress with the formulations, we could start, preliminarily, adopting or approving those agreed formulations.

I thought it would be a good idea to give Ambassador Hoffmann, Chairman of Working Group II, more formal meetings, because that Working Group has already started with specific formulations, in order to allow it to continue

(Mr. Erdenechuluun, Chairman, Working Group III)

with its substantive work. That was the intention, and I do not believe that these informal consultations in Working Group III would have any negative impact in any way on the work we are doing right now.

The CHAIRMAN: As you see, there is the idea of keeping a balance and being realistic in dealing with the specific working methods of the Working Groups; obviously, when we go into our working timetable for the third week, we will take into account the differing allocations of time that were made during the second week.

Does any other delegation wish to comment on the working timetable?

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom): I think you have managed, Mr. Chairman, to satisfy most of us extremely well.

I have just one small suggestion, and that is, on Thursday afternoon, perhaps Working Group II should not begin its informal consultations until 4.30 p.m., like Working Group III. This would enable Working Group I to have half an afternoon to itself. After all, this morning it has only half a morning to itself, and this would mean that we had one whole period of three hours, broken up, admittedly, into two halves, when Working Group I could meet without competing meetings.

I recall the experience of last week, when there was competition and we saw that Working Group I was rather neglected: at one stage, I think there were only about 15 delegations present. I wonder if starting Working Group II later would not be a better way of approaching the matter.

The CHAIRMAN: The representative of the United Kingdom has suggested - and I think it is a suggestion that we could possibly take up - that on Thursday afternoon we have a formal meeting of Working Group I, on nuclear disarmament, from 3.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. That formal meeting would not be concurrent with any other meeting of a Working Group. Then from 4.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. we would have informal consultations, on both science and technology and regional disarmament, the change being that the meeting of Working Group II on regional disarmament would only begin at 4.30 p.m. or upon the conclusion of the meeting of Working Group I. Would this be agreeable? The representative of Germany, who is Chairman of Working Group II, indicates that he would be in agreement. If everyone is in agreement, we can put this change into the working timetable.

If there are no other comments on the timetable, I will consider this change agreed upon. Perhaps the Secretariat could issue a revised version of the timetable.

Since no other delegation wishes to raise any other question in relation to the work of the Commission at this point, I should just like to say that our next plenary meeting will be held, in principle, next Monday, 3 May at 10 a.m., when we will return to consider the reports of the Working Groups and also our working timetable for the third week of work.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.